New Teacher Center
Launching the Next Generation

Practice Brief

April 2010

Mentor Assessment and Accountability:

Promoting Growth

Educators who step forward to become mentors of new colleagues take on the responsibility of shaping the practice and accelerating the development of the next generation of teachers. The New Teacher Center (NTC) believes that induction and mentor programs that invest significant resources need to ask themselves: Are our mentors growing? How do we know? How can we advance their effectiveness? What structures can we implement to support growth and provide accountability? Induction programs need procedures, tools and protocols for mentor professional development, supervision, assessment, and accountability.

The NTC advocates a multi-faceted, growth oriented system of support and accountability that includes:

- A mentor formative assessment and goal setting process that parallels that of beginning teachers
- Participation in a mentor professional learning community where growth and accountability are norms
- Collection and analysis of new teacher and student learning data to guide mentoring
- Survey data from principals and beginning teachers to enable mentors to compare program effectiveness

NTC considers several aspects of developing effective mentors. First, mentor recruitment must be strategic; mentor selection is a key to an effective induction program. Second, just as teachers continuously grow professionally, so mentors need the support of professional development and a formative assessment system to improve their practice. Third, professional growth and accountability is the focus of assessment.

There is no one size fits all solution. This practice brief offers suggestions, options, and guidelines for assessment for mentor growth and accountability.

Mentor Roles and Responsibilities

Even before mentor selection, it is important that everyone involved clearly understands the mentor's roles and responsibilities. Mentor recruitment publications can include explicit responsibilities, which are articulated during the interview. Once a mentor is selected, expectations can be reviewed again. Beginning teachers also need clarity of theirs and their mentor's responsibilities. This clarification at the beginning of a mentor's tenure can preclude later misunderstandings. Induction programs make public such responsibilities as:

- The number of hours per week a mentor meets with and observes the beginning teacher and required recordkeeping
- The number of beginning teachers the mentor will support
- Required professional development trainings and forums
- Beginning teacher and mentor goal setting
- Mentor responsibility for beginning teacher professional development
- Formative assessment tools
- Collaboration with colleagues
- Mentor assessment
- Required types of beginning teacher support
- Interactions with principals
- Confidentiality guidelines
- Assembling a portfolio of artifacts of practice

Once the mentor roles and responsibilities are clear, programs can design procedures and protocols so mentors can grow and become accountable.

Mentor Professional Goal Setting

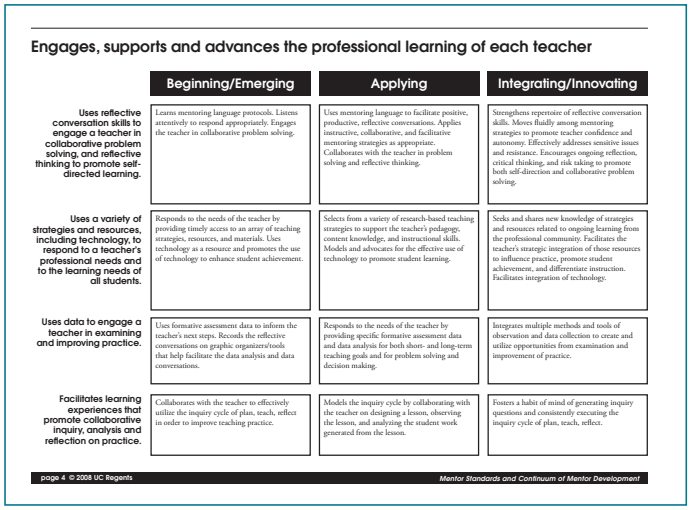
NTC has learned that mentor goal setting is the first step. Active participation in setting goals assures buy-in and assessing growth becomes ongoing. Like professional teaching standards, mentor professional standards give language to what effective mentors must know and be able to do. They are used to guide the mentors' growth, self-assessment and accountability. Mentor standards are integrated into many mentor formative assessment tools including setting professional goals.

1. Setting professional goals

First, a mentor reviews program expectations and standards, then self-assesses strengths and areas for growth, using the *Mentor Formative Assessment System* (FAS) Tool, *Mentor Standards and Continuum of Mentor Development,* which includes six mentor standards:

1. Engages, supports, and advances the teacher's professional learning
2. Uses knowledge of student content standards, teaching pedagogy and professional teaching standards
3. Uses assessments to promote teacher learning and development

4. Creates and maintains collaborative and professional partnerships to support teacher growth
5. Designs and facilitates professional development for teachers
6. Develops as a professional leader to advance mentoring and the profession



Engages, supports and advances the professional learning of each teacher

	Beginning/Emerging	Applying	Integrating/Innovating
Uses reflective conversation skills to engage a teacher in collaborative problem solving, and reflective thinking to promote self-directed learning.	Learns mentoring language protocols. Listens attentively to respond appropriately. Engages the teacher in collaborative problem solving.	Uses mentoring language to facilitate positive, productive, reflective conversations. Applies instructive, collaborative, and facilitative mentoring strategies as appropriate. Collaborates with the teacher in problem solving and reflective thinking.	Strengthens repertoire of reflective conversation skills. Moves fluidly among mentoring strategies to promote teacher confidence and autonomy. Effectively addresses sensitive issues and resistance. Encourages ongoing reflection, critical thinking, and risk taking to promote both self-direction and collaborative problem solving.
Uses a variety of strategies and resources, including technology, to respond to a teacher's professional needs and to the learning needs of all students.	Responds to the needs of the teacher by providing timely access to an array of teaching strategies, resources, and materials. Uses technology as a resource and promotes the use of technology to enhance student achievement.	Selects from a variety of research-based teaching strategies to support the teacher's pedagogy, content knowledge, and instructional skills. Models and advocates for the effective use of technology to promote student learning.	Seeks and shares new knowledge of strategies and resources related to ongoing learning from the professional community. Facilitates the teacher's strategic integration of those resources to influence practice, promote student achievement, and differentiate instruction. Facilitates integration of technology.
Uses data to engage a teacher in examining and improving practice.	Uses formative assessment data to inform the teacher's next steps. Records the reflective conversations on graphic organizers/tools that help facilitate the data analysis and data conversations.	Responds to the needs of the teacher by providing specific formative assessment data and data analysis for both short- and long-term teaching goals and for problem solving and decision making.	Integrates multiple methods and tools of observation and data collection to create and utilize opportunities from examination and improvement of practice.
Facilitates learning experiences that promote collaborative inquiry, analysis and reflection on practice.	Collaborates with the teacher to effectively utilize the inquiry cycle of plan, teach, reflect in order to improve teaching practice.	Models the inquiry cycle by collaborating with the teacher on designing a lesson, observing the lesson, and analyzing the student work generated from the lesson.	Fosters a habit of mind of generating inquiry questions and consistently executing the inquiry cycle of plan, teach, reflect.

page 4 © 2008 UC Regents — *Mentor Standards and Continuum of Mentor Development*

Continuum of Mentor Development

Using the *Mentor Self-Assessment Summary*, mentors identify strengths and areas for growth, and then write goals to create an *Individual Learning Plan (ILP)*, which includes supporting goals, specific steps to be taken, and evidence of progress toward these goals. The mentor shares the *ILP* with a coaching partner, a mentor colleague. Once goals are finalized, mentors share them with the program lead. The *ILP* becomes a focus for a mentor's growth and accountability.

2. Assessing progress at mid-year

Mentors assess progress toward goals mid-year. After analyzing evidence such as *Collaborative Assessment Logs (CAL)* and coaching conversation notes, mentors self-assess again on the *Mentor Continuum* and use the *Mentor Mid-Year Review* to summarize progress and decide on next steps. This tool structures another conversation with the coaching partner. Each partner takes time to reflect on their practice while the other records on a *Mentor CAL*. Mentors make revisions to goals or write new ones, then meet with the program lead to discuss progress and needed support.

3. End of year reflection

At the end of the school year, mentors once more reflect on professional growth, self-assess, and share evidence of progress using the *Mentor Professional Growth Reflections.* This goal setting process makes mentor practice public and holds them accountable. Mentor standards insure that goals are realistic and important. When program leads observe mentors in their practice, it is important to focus data collection on mentor goals.

When mentors assess their own strengths and challenges, set meaningful goals and consistently assess progress toward them, it guides growth and support and provides accountability.

Mentor Professional Development

Mentors need support for growth. While they have become effective classroom teachers, they now must learn new skills and concepts to be successful instructional mentors. Thus, induction programs must offer ongoing professional development. It is a mentor's professional responsibility to work continuously to improve practice.

Mentors learn the essential understandings and skills in Mentor Academies and join professional learning communities called Mentor Forums. They practice using formative assessment tools and problem-solve. Forums offer a safe environment for mentor growth and accountability. (See NTC Practice Brief—*Mentor Forums, Spring 2009*) Forums also focus on analysis of data of mentor work. Program leads can ascertain the effectiveness of program implementation and mentor practice by facilitating, observing and participating in Forums.

Peer coaching is an important component of mentor professional growth and accountability. Research shows that professional development is seldom applied unless there is peer-coaching support. (Joyce and Showers, 1996)) Mentor coaching partnerships meet regularly to self-assess progress, problem-solve, observe each other and offer feedback to help insure program quality and enculturation of new mentors.

Accountability—Beyond Compliance

In education, there is currently an increased focus on accountability. Those who make fiscal decisions want to know program effectiveness, and induction leads want to learn which aspects of the program are working. Strategic data collection and analysis is key. What kind of information will improve the program? Mentor effectiveness? Beginning teacher practice? Student growth? Clear outcomes guide data collection and analysis.

The purpose is to move beyond compliance—check-off lists of duties and other evidence of task completion—to accountability. Teacher retention is important. But improved beginning teacher practice for greater student success is the primary focus. If there is little evidence that mentors are having a positive impact on student learning, leads have to examine the program and focus on improvement.

Tools and Strategies to Measure Mentor Accountability

1. In some induction programs, mentors enter into data bases the time spent with each beginning teacher, teacher goals, formative assessment tools used, roles assumed and how support is tailored. These data are analyzed to determine program and mentor effectiveness.

2. In some states, formal induction is a requirement of licensure. Novice teachers must show evidence of completion of requirements to attain a full teaching license or credential.
3. Observations of mentor practice provide data to support mentor growth and accountability. The protocol includes a pre-conference to narrow focus for data collection, observation of mentor practice, and a reflecting conversation to share data, reflect, and agree on next steps. Pre and post conversations are recorded on *Mentor Field Observation: Planning and Reflecting Conversations*. Mentor observations are scheduled at the start of the year, and artifacts from these are added to portfolios.
4. Surveys such as the *NTC Induction Survey* collect data from principals, beginning teachers and mentors, to provide feedback to individual mentors and induction programs. Leads determine general patterns and create or locate differentiated professional development to meet mentor needs. Responsibility for growth falls on both the program and individual mentors.
5. The Beginning Teacher (BT) Case Study offers another source of data of mentor practice. By focusing on one beginning teacher and collecting artifacts of mentor support (BT *FAS* tools), BT Case Studies promote reflection and analysis of mentor practice and teacher growth. Analysis of data happens both with a coaching partner and in small groups. Mentors practice conversations with their case study beginning teacher in a whole group, "fishbowl" format, or small group. While these conversations are professional development opportunities, program leaders can assess the strengths and needs of mentors.
6. Evidence of beginning teacher growth and student learning are sources of data for mentor accountability. The *Analysis of Student Work* can indicate student growth, identify student needs and guide differentiated instruction. BT lesson plans can reflect growth over time. These, coupled with BT *CAL*s, are evidence of mentor impact on practice. Student work, engagement, attendance, and test scores can also provide evidence of mentor impact if they are related specifically to the beginning teacher's goals and are targeted for improvement. The mentor can use the *Analysis of Beginning Teacher Development* to assess beginning teachers' growth in professional teaching standards, determine next steps and describe evidence of growth. Classroom observation data, attendance records and test scores provide assessment data.
7. One mentor responsibility is to become an educational leader—to clearly articulate and advocate for the role of induction and mentoring to principals and other stakeholders, and plan and facilitate mentor forums and beginning teacher seminars. *Principal Interaction Logs* provide evidence of communication and increasing leadership growth.
8. Mentor portfolios contain artifacts of practice and serve to both assess practice and provide accountability. Throughout the school year, mentors collect artifacts of their work. Portfolios can include professional goals and reflections, BT Case Study, BT and Mentor *CALs*, mentor observations, artifacts of creating and facilitating professional development, and stakeholder presentations. Portfolios can be shared with leads and colleagues and used as an accountability measure.

Mentors have opportunities to influence the lives of new teachers and their students. Every day, mentors model professionalism by collaborating and supporting equitable practices. Mentors challenge the status quo by redefining educational norms: articulating excellence, supporting life-long learning, advocating systemic change to meet the needs of all teachers and their students. Multiple sources of strategic and appropriate data and analyses can offer accountability, assess mentor growth, pinpoint needed support and provide compelling evidence of value.

Inquiry Questions

1. In what ways does your induction program assess and support mentor growth? How do you know the degree of your program effectiveness?
2. What types of data of mentor practice do you collect? How is it analyzed and used?
3. What are the roles and responsibilities of mentors? How do you make these known? How do you assess mentor performance on fulfilling these?
4. Does your program use professional mentor standards? What value do you see in them?
5. What tools and structures does your program use for mentor accountability? How can they or other tools be used for mentor support and accountability?
6. Is your program using any accountability processes that could be perceived as "gotchas" by mentors? Can you use them in a manner where they are seen as promoting mentor growth while still holding mentors accountable?
7. To what degree should student achievement factor into mentor accountability? How can this data be used?

Resources

Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers, "The Evolution of Peer Coaching," *Educational Leadership, March 1996 v53 n6 p12 (5)*

Mentor Assessment for Growth and Accountability, (Teacher Induction Professional Development Module), NTC

Supported by **MetLife Foundation**

Case Study: Gotcha!

Two heads, almost touching, bent over a scattering of collaborative logs, notes, and selective scriptings, strewn across the table like so many fall leaves. It was hard to believe that almost a year had passed since these two first came together to face the challenge and excitement of a new professional experience—mentoring a group of brand new teachers in high-need schools. As coaching partners, Serena and Kelly were perhaps the least likely of partners. One, a high school biology teacher in a large urban district, the other an eighth grade English teacher from a large suburban district; one religious, the other largely agnostic; one single, the other with grandchildren; one African-American, the other Caucasian. They both held a passion for ensuring that students in the highest need schools receive a quality education, and they both remembered the challenges a first-year teacher faces.

As mentor facilitator, it was my job to ensure that these new mentors had the support and tools that they needed to support new teachers in the most challenging settings. I listened in awe as Kelly and Serena discussed their progress with mentor language. Serena came from an urban district where teacher support tended to be directive. Kelly, who had worked in inner-city Los Angeles, embraced mentor language as a gentle way of supporting teachers in extremely challenging settings. Kelly reminded Serena of the importance of using mentor language to achieve buy-in from struggling beginning teachers, while Serena reminded Kelly that there was a time and a place to "tell it like it is!" They talked about how Serena, with her strong science background, had offered invaluable academic support for a struggling earth science teacher that Kelly was supporting. And Kelly grinned as she described her deeper understanding of a young teacher's struggle to provide appropriate support for her African-American students. From a recent visit to Serena's church, Kelly recalled the high level of interactive, kinesthetic participation that so astounded her; no wonder these students struggled to sit still and listen in the young teacher's traditional classroom setting!

As our first year drew to a close, I invited coaching partners to meet with me for a big picture look at their first year as mentors. Coaching partner triads met in celebratory settings all over the Richmond metropolitan area as we laughed, ate, and reconstructed amazing pictures of the important mentoring work in which we had been immersed all year long. The coaching partners took the lead in these conversations as they completed collaborative logs, teasing out the triumphs and the challenges, and deciding on next steps for their work together.

Kelly turned toward Serena. "For me, our relationship has been one of complete trust. Working as a novice mentor and grappling with so many new challenges felt a lot like balancing on a high wire over a yawning precipice. Except, you were also there to catch me when I fell…" "…creating a whole new meaning for 'gotcha'!" broke in Serena with a grin.

Laughing together, Kelly and Serena began their second year of work in the complex business of providing high-quality mentoring back where they started—side-by-side with a colleague who had the same passion for ensuring that students in the highest need schools receive a quality education.

— Janet H. Tusing, M.Ed., Teacher Leader in Residence, Virginia Commonwealth University, April 22, 2010

About the New Teacher Center

The New Teacher Center is a national organization dedicated to improving student learning by accelerating the effectiveness of teachers and school leaders. NTC strengthens school communities through proven mentoring and professional development programs, online learning environments, policy advocacy, and research. Since 1998, NTC has served over 49,000 teachers and 5,000 mentors, touching millions of students across America.

New Teacher Center
Launching the Next Generation

725 Front Street, Suite 400 | Santa Cruz, CA 95060
831-600-2200 | Fax: 831-427-9017 | info@newteachercenter.org
www.newteachercenter.org

This publication is printed on 10% post-consumer waste recycled paper using chemistry-free printing plates and vegetable-based inks. The virgin fiber is grown domestically and is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council as coming from sustainable forests.

BRF-MAA-US-1004-EN